CHAPTER XV

THE FIRST MAN

The mystery of the apparently occult methods of communication among the natives of India, between whom, it is said, news flies by means too strange and subtle to be humanly explainable, is no more difficult a problem to solve than that of the lightning rapidity with which a knowledge of the transpiring of any new local event darts through the slowest, and, as far as outward signs go, the least communicative English village slumbering drowsily among its pastures and trees.

That which the Hall or Manor House believed last night, known only to the four walls of its drawing-room, is discussed over the cottage breakfast tables as though presented in detail through the columns of the Morning Post. The vicarage, the smithy, the post office, the little provision shop, are instantaneously informed as by magic of such incidents of interest as occur, and are prepared to assist vicariously at any future developments. Through what agency information is given no one can tell, and, indeed, the agency is of small moment. Facts of interest are perhaps like flights of swallows and dart chattering from one red roof to another, proclaiming themselves aloud. Nothing is so true as that in such villages they are the property and innocent playthings of man, woman, and child, providing conversation and drama otherwise likely to be lacked.

When Miss Vanderpoel walked through Stornham village street she became aware that she was an exciting object of interest. Faces appeared at cottage windows, women sauntered to doors, men in the taproom of the Clock Inn left beer mugs to cast an eye on her; children pushed open gates and stared as they bobbed their curtsies; the young woman who kept the shop left her counter and came out upon her door step to pick up her straying baby and glance over its shoulder at the face with the red mouth, and the mass of black hair rolled upward under a rough blue straw hat. Everyone knew who this exotic-looking young lady was. She had arrived yesterday from London, and a week ago by means of a ship from far-away America, from the country in connection with which the rural mind curiously mixed up large wages, great fortunes and Indians. "Gaarge" Lunsden, having spent five years of his youth labouring heavily for sixteen shillings a week, had gone to "Meriker" and had earned there eight shillings a day. This was a well-known and much-talked over fact, and had elevated the western continent to a position of trust and importance it had seriously lacked before the emigration of Lunsden. A place where a man could earn eight shillings a day inspired interest as well as confidence. When Sir Nigel's wife had arrived twelve years ago as the new Lady Anstruthers, the story that she herself "had money" had been verified by her fine clothes and her way of handing out sovereigns in cases where the rest of the gentry, if they gave at all, would have bestowed tea and flannel or shillings. There had been for a few months a period of unheard of well-being in Stornham village; everyone remembered the hundred pounds the bride had given to poor Wilson when his place had burned down, but the village had of course learned, by its occult means,

that Sir Nigel and the Dowager had been angry and that there had been a quarrel. Afterwards her ladyship had been dangerously ill, the baby had been born a hunchback, and a year had passed before its mother had been seen again. Since then she had been a changed creature; she had lost her looks and seemed to care for nothing but the child. Stornham village saw next to nothing of her, and it certainly was not she who had the dispensing of her fortune. Rumour said Sir Nigel lived high in London and foreign parts, but there was no high living at the Court. Her ladyship's family had never been near her, and belief in them and their wealth almost ceased to exist. If they were rich, Stornham felt that it was their business to mend roofs and windows and not allow chimneys and kitchen boilers to fall into ruin, the simple, leading article of faith being that even American money belonged properly to England.

As Miss Vanderpoel walked at a light, swinging pace through the one village street the gazers felt with Kedgers that something new was passing and stirring the atmosphere. She looked straight, and with a friendliness somehow dominating, at the curious women; her handsome eyes
met those of the men in a human questioning; she smiled and nodded to the bobbing children. One of these, young enough to be uncertain on its feet, in running to join some others stumbled and fell on the path before her. Opening its mouth in the inevitable resultant roar, it was shocked almost into silence by the tall young lady stooping at once, picking it up, and cheerfully dusting its pinafore.

"Don't cry," she said; "you are not hurt, you know."

The deep dimple near her mouth showed itself, and the laugh in her eyes was so reassuring that the penny she put into the grubby hand was less productive of effect than her mere self. She walked on, leaving the group staring after her breathless, because of a sense of having met with a wonderful adventure. The grand young lady with the black hair and the blue hat and tall, straight body was the adventure. She left the same sense of event with the village itself. They talked of her all day over their garden palings, on their doorsteps, in the street; of her looks, of her height, of the black rim of lashes round her eyes, of the chance that she might be rich and ready to give half-crowns and sovereigns, of the "Meriker" she had come from, and above all of the reason for her coming.

Betty swung with the light, firm step of a good walker out on to the highway. To walk upon the fine, smooth old Roman road was a pleasure in itself, but she soon struck away from it and went through lanes and by-ways, following sign-posts because she knew where she was going. Her walk was to take her to Mount Dunstan and home again by another road. In walking, an objective point forms an interest, and what she had heard of the estate from Rosalie was a vague reason for her caring to see it. It was another place like Stornham, once dignified and nobly representative of fine things, now losing their meanings and values. Values and meanings, other than mere signs of wealth and power, there had been. Centuries ago strong creatures had planned and built it for such reasons

as strength has for its planning and building. In Bettina Vanderpoel's imagination the First Man held powerful and moving sway. It was he whom she always saw. In history, as a child at school, she had understood and drawn close to him. There was always a First Man behind all that one saw or was told, one who was the fighter, the human thing who snatched weapons and tools from stones and trees and wielded them in the carrying out of the thought which was his possession and his strength. He was the God made human; others waited, without knowledge of their waiting, for the signal he gave. A man like others--with man's body, hands, and limbs, and eyes--the moving of a whole world was subtly altered by his birth. One could not always trace him, but with stone axe and spear point he had won savage lands in savage ways, and so ruled them that, leaving them to other hands, their march towards less savage life could not stay itself, but must sweep on; others of his kind, striking rude harps, had so sung that the loud clearness of their wild songs had rung through the ages, and echo still in strains which are theirs, though voices of to-day repeat the note of them. The First Man, a Briton stained with woad and hung with skins, had tilled the luscious greenness of the lands richly rolling now within hedge boundaries. The square church towers rose, holding their slender corner spires above the trees, as a result of the First Man, Norman William. The thought which held its place, the work which did not pass away, had paid its First Man wages; but beauties crumbling, homes falling to waste, were bitter things. The First Man, who, having won his splendid acres, had built his home upon them and reared his young and passed his possession on with a proud heart, seemed but ill treated. Through centuries the home had enriched

itself, its acres had borne harvests, its trees had grown and spread huge branches, full lives had been lived within the embrace of the massive walls, there had been loves and lives and marriages and births, the breathings of them made warm and full the very air. To Betty it seemed that the land itself would have worn another face if it had not been trodden by so many springing feet, if so many harvests had not waved above it, if so many eyes had not looked upon and loved it.

She passed through variations of the rural loveliness she had seen on her way from the station to the Court, and felt them grow in beauty as she saw them again. She came at last to a village somewhat larger than Stornham and marked by the signs of the lack of money-spending care which Stornham showed. Just beyond its limits a big park gate opened on to an avenue of massive trees. She stopped and looked down it, but could see nothing but its curves and, under the branches, glimpses of a spacious sweep of park with other trees standing in groups or alone in the sward. The avenue was unswept and untended, and here and there boughs broken off by wind.

Storms lay upon it. She turned to the road again and followed it, because it enclosed the park and she wanted to see more of its evident beauty. It was very beautiful. As she walked on she saw it rolled into woods and deeps filled with bracken; she saw stretches of hillocky, fine-grassed rabbit warren, and hollows holding shadowy pools; she caught the gleam of a lake with swans sailing slowly upon it with curved necks; there were wonderful lights and wonderful shadows, and brooding

stillness, which made her footfall upon the road a too material thing.

Suddenly she heard a stirring in the bracken a yard or two away from her. Something was moving slowly among the waving masses of huge fronds and caused them to sway to and fro. It was an antlered stag who rose from his bed in the midst of them, and with majestic deliberation got upon his feet and stood gazing at her with a calmness of pose so splendid, and a liquid darkness and lustre of eye so stilly and fearlessly beautiful, that she caught her breath. He simply gazed as her as a great king might gaze at an intruder, scarcely deigning wonder.

As she had passed on her way, Betty had seen that the enclosing park palings were decaying, covered with lichen and falling at intervals. It had even passed through her mind that here was one of the demands for expenditure on a large estate, which limited resources could not confront with composure. The deer fence itself, a thing of wire ten feet high, to form an obstacle to leaps, she had marked to be in such condition as to threaten to become shortly a useless thing. Until this moment she had seen no deer, but looking beyond the stag and across the sward she now saw groups near each other, stags cropping or looking towards her with lifted heads, does at a respectful but affectionate distance from them, some caring for their fawns. The stag who had risen near her had merely walked through a gap in the boundary and now stood free to go where he would.

"He will get away," said Betty, knitting her black brows. Ah! what a

shame!

Even with the best intentions one could not give chase to a stag. She looked up and down the road, but no one was within sight. Her brows continued to knit themselves and her eyes ranged over the park itself in the hope that some labourer on the estate, some woodman or game-keeper, might be about.

"It is no affair of mine," she said, "but it would be too bad to let him get away, though what happens to stray stags one doesn't exactly know."

As she said it she caught sight of someone, a man in leggings and shabby clothes and with a gun over his shoulder, evidently an under keeper. He was a big, rather rough-looking fellow, but as he lurched out into the open from a wood Betty saw that she could reach him if she passed through a narrow gate a few yards away and walked quickly.

He was slouching along, his head drooping and his broad shoulders expressing the definite antipodes of good spirits. Betty studied his back as she strode after him, her conclusion being that he was perhaps not a good-humoured man to approach at any time, and that this was by ill luck one of his less fortunate hours.

"Wait a moment, if you please," her clear, mellow voice flung out after him when she was within hearing distance. "I want to speak to you,

keeper."

He turned with an air of far from pleased surprise. The afternoon sun was in his eyes and made him scowl. For a moment he did not see distinctly who was approaching him, but he had at once recognised a certain cool tone of command in the voice whose suddenness had roused him from a black mood. A few steps brought them to close quarters, and when he found himself looking into the eyes of his pursuer he made a movement as if to lift his cap, then checking himself, touched it, keeper fashion.

"Oh!" he said shortly. "Miss Vanderpoel! Beg pardon."

Bettina stood still a second. She had her surprise also. Here was the unexpected again. The under keeper was the red-haired second-class passenger of the Meridiana.

He did not look pleased to see her, and the suddenness of his appearance excluded the possibility of her realising that upon the whole she was at least not displeased to see him.

"How do you do?" she said, feeling the remark fantastically conventional, but not being inspired by any alternative. "I came to tell you that one of the stags has got through a gap in the fence."

"Damn!" she heard him say under his breath. Aloud he said, "Thank you."

"He is a splendid creature," she said. "I did not know what to do. I was glad to see a keeper coming."

"Thank you," he said again, and strode towards the place where the stag still stood gazing up the road, as if reflecting as to whether it allured him or not.

Betty walked back more slowly, watching him with interest. She wondered what he would find it necessary to do. She heard him begin a low, flute-like whistling, and then saw the antlered head turn towards him. The woodland creature moved, but it was in his direction. It had without doubt answered his call before and knew its meaning to be friendly. It went towards him, stretching out a tender sniffing nose, and he put his hand in the pocket of his rough coat and gave it something to eat. Afterwards he went to the gap in the fence and drew the wires together, fastening them with other wire, which he also took out of the coat pocket.

"He is not afraid of making himself useful," thought Betty. "And the animals know him. He is not as bad as he looks."

She lingered a moment watching him, and then walked towards the gate through which she had entered. He glanced up as she neared him.

"I don't see your carriage," he said. "Your man is probably round the

trees."

"I walked," answered Betty. "I had heard of this place and wanted to see it."

He stood up, putting his wire back into his pocket.

"There is not much to be seen from the road," he said. "Would you like to see more of it?"

His manner was civil enough, but not the correct one for a servant. He did not say "miss" or touch his cap in making the suggestion. Betty hesitated a moment.

"Is the family at home?" she inquired.

"There is no family but--his lordship. He is off the place."

"Does he object to trespassers?"

"Not if they are respectable and take no liberties."

"I am respectable, and I shall not take liberties," said Miss Vanderpoel, with a touch of hauteur. The truth was that she had spent a sufficient number of years on the Continent to have become familiar with conventions which led her not to approve wholly of his bearing. Perhaps

he had lived long enough in America to forget such conventions and to lack something which centuries of custom had decided should belong to his class. A certain suggestion of rough force in the man rather attracted her, and her slight distaste for his manner arose from the realisation that a gentleman's servant who did not address his superiors as was required by custom was not doing his work in a finished way. In his place she knew her own demeanour would have been finished.

"If you are sure that Lord Mount Dunstan would not object to my walking about, I should like very much to see the gardens and the house," she said. "If you show them to me, shall I be interfering with your duties?"

"No," he answered, and then for the first time rather glumly added, "miss."

"I am interested," she said, as they crossed the grass together, "because places like this are quite new to me. I have never been in England before."

"There are not many places like this," he answered, "not many as old and fine, and not many as nearly gone to ruin. Even Stornham is not quite as far gone."

"It is far gone," said Miss Vanderpoel. "I am staying there--with my sister, Lady Anstruthers."

"Beg pardon--miss," he said. This time he touched his cap in apology.

Enormous as the gulf between their positions was, he knew that he had offered to take her over the place because he was in a sense glad to see her again. Why he was glad he did not profess to know or even to ask himself. Coarsely speaking, it might be because she was one of the handsomest young women he had ever chanced to meet with, and while her youth was apparent in the rich red of her mouth, the mass of her thick, soft hair and the splendid blue of her eyes, there spoke in every line of face and pose something intensely more interesting and compelling than girlhood. Also, since the night they had come together on the ship's deck for an appalling moment, he had liked her better and rebelled less against the unnatural wealth she represented. He led her first to the wood from which she had seen him emerge.

"I will show you this first," he explained. "Keep your eyes on the ground until I tell you to raise them."

Odd as this was, she obeyed, and her lowered glance showed her that she was being guided along a narrow path between trees. The light was mellow golden-green, and birds were singing in the boughs above her. In a few minutes he stopped.

"Now look up," he said.

She uttered an exclamation when she did so. She was in a fairy dell

thick with ferns, and at beautiful distances from each other incredibly splendid oaks spread and almost trailed their lovely giant branches. The glow shining through and between them, the shadows beneath them, their great boles and moss-covered roots, and the stately, mellow distances revealed under their branches, the ancient wildness and richness, which meant, after all, centuries of cultivation, made a picture in this exact, perfect moment of ripening afternoon sun of an almost unbelievable beauty.

"There is nothing lovelier," he said in a low voice, "in all England."

Bettina turned to look at him, because his tone was a curious one for a man like himself. He was standing resting on his gun and taking in the loveliness with a strange look in his rugged face.

"You--you love it!" she said.

"Yes," but with a suggestion of stubborn reluctance in the admission.

She was rather moved.

"Have you been keeper here long?" she asked.

"No--only a few years. But I have known the place all my life."

"Does Lord Mount Dunstan love it?"

"In his way--yes."

He was plainly not disposed to talk of his master. He was perhaps not on particularly good terms with him. He led her away and volunteered no further information. He was, upon the whole, uncommunicative. He did not once refer to the circumstance of their having met before. It was plain that he had no intention of presuming upon the fact that he, as a second-class passenger on a ship, had once been forced by accident across the barriers between himself and the saloon deck. He was stubbornly resolved to keep his place; so stubbornly that Bettina felt that to broach the subject herself would verge upon offence.

But the golden ways through which he led her made the afternoon one she knew she should never forget. They wandered through moss walks and alleys, through tangled shrubberies bursting into bloom, beneath avenues of blossoming horse-chestnuts and scented limes, between thickets of budding red and white may, and jungles of neglected rhododendrons; through sunken gardens and walled ones, past terraces with broken balustrades of stone, and fallen Floras and Dianas, past moss-grown fountains splashing in lovely corners. Arches, overgrown with yet unblooming roses, crumbled in their time stained beauty. Stillness brooded over it all, and they met no one. They scarcely broke the silence themselves. The man led the way as one who knew it by heart, and Bettina followed, not caring for speech herself, because the stillness seemed to add a spell of enchantment. What could one say, to a stranger,

of such beauty so lost and given over to ruin and decay.

"But, oh!" she murmured once, standing still, with indrawn breath, "if it were mine!--if it were mine!" And she said the thing forgetting that her guide was a living creature and stood near.

Afterwards her memories of it all seemed to her like the memories of a dream. The lack of speech between herself and the man who led her, his often averted face, her own sense of the desertedness of each beauteous spot she passed through, the mossy paths which gave back no sound of footfalls as they walked, suggested, one and all, unreality. When at last they passed through a door half hidden in an ivied wall, and crossing a grassed bowling green, mounted a short flight of broken steps which led them to a point through which they saw the house through a break in the trees, this last was the final touch of all. It was a great place, stately in its masses of grey stone to which thick ivy clung. To Bettina it seemed that a hundred windows stared at her with closed, blind eyes. All were shuttered but two or three on the lower floors. Not one showed signs of life. The silent stone thing stood sightless among all of which it was dead master--rolling acres, great trees, lost gardens and deserted groves.

"Oh!" she sighed, "Oh!"

Her companion stood still and leaned upon his gun again, looking as he had looked before.

"Some of it," he said, "was here before the Conquest. It belonged to Mount Dunstans then."

"And only one of them is left," she cried, "and it is like this!"

"They have been a bad lot, the last hundred years," was the surly liberty of speech he took, "a bad lot."

It was not his place to speak in such manner of those of his master's house, and it was not the part of Miss Vanderpoel to encourage him by response. She remained silent, standing perhaps a trifle more lightly erect as she gazed at the rows of blind windows in silence.

Neither of them uttered a word for some time, but at length Bettina roused herself. She had a six-mile walk before her and must go.

"I am very much obliged to you," she began, and then paused a second. A curious hesitance came upon her, though she knew that under ordinary circumstances such hesitation would have been totally out of place. She had occupied the man's time for an hour or more, he was of the working class, and one must not be guilty of the error of imagining that a man who has work to do can justly spend his time in one's service for the mere pleasure of it. She knew what custom demanded. Why should she hesitate before this man, with his not too courteous, surly face. She felt slightly irritated by her own unpractical embarrassment as she put

her hand into the small, latched bag at her belt.

"I am very much obliged, keeper," she said. "You have given me a great deal of your time. You know the place so well that it has been a pleasure to be taken about by you. I have never seen anything so beautiful--and so sad. Thank you--thank you." And she put a goldpiece in his palm.

His fingers closed over it quietly. Why it was to her great relief she did not know--because something in the simple act annoyed her, even while she congratulated herself that her hesitance had been absurd. The next moment she wondered if it could be possible that he had expected a larger fee. He opened his hand and looked at the money with a grim steadiness.

"Thank you, miss," he said, and touched his cap in the proper manner.

He did not look gracious or grateful, but he began to put it in a small pocket in the breast of his worn corduroy shooting jacket. Suddenly he stopped, as if with abrupt resolve. He handed the coin back without any change of his glum look.

"Hang it all," he said, "I can't take this, you know. I suppose I ought to have told you. It would have been less awkward for us both. I am that unfortunate beggar, Mount Dunstan, myself."

A pause was inevitable. It was a rather long one. After it, Betty took back her half-sovereign and returned it to her bag, but she pleased a certain perversity in him by looking more annoyed than confused.

"Yes," she said. "You ought to have told me, Lord Mount Dunstan."

He slightly shrugged his big shoulders.

"Why shouldn't you take me for a keeper? You crossed the Atlantic with a fourth-rate looking fellow separated from you by barriers of wood and iron. You came upon him tramping over a nobleman's estate in shabby corduroys and gaiters, with a gun over his shoulder and a scowl on his ugly face. Why should you leap to the conclusion that he is the belted Earl himself? There is no cause for embarrassment."

"I am not embarrassed," said Bettina.

"That is what I like," gruffly.

"I am pleased," in her mellowest velvet voice, "that you like it."

Their eyes met with a singular directness of gaze. Between them a spark passed which was not afterwards to be extinguished, though neither of them knew the moment of its kindling, and Mount Dunstan slightly frowned.

"I beg pardon," he said. "You are quite right. It had a deucedly patronising sound."

As he stood before her Betty was given her opportunity to see him as she had not seen him before, to confront the sum total of his physique. His red-brown eyes looked out from rather fine heavy brows, his features were strong and clear, though ruggedly cut, his build showed weight of bone, not of flesh, and his limbs were big and long. He would have wielded a battle-axe with power in centuries in which men hewed their way with them. Also it occurred to her he would have looked well in a coat of mail. He did not look ill in his corduroys and gaiters.

"I am a self-absorbed beggar," he went on. "I had been slouching about the place, almost driven mad by my thoughts, and when I saw you took me for a servant my fancy was for letting the thing go on. If I had been a rich man instead of a pauper I would have kept your half-sovereign."

"I should not have enjoyed that when I found out the truth," said Miss Vanderpoel.

"No, I suppose you wouldn't. But I should not have cared."

He was looking at her straightly and summing her up as she had summed him up. A man and young, he did not miss a line or a tint of her chin or cheek, shoulder, or brow, or dense, lifted hair. He had already, even

in his guise of keeper, noticed one thing, which was that while at times her eyes were the blue of steel, sometimes they melted to the colour of bluebells under water. They had been of this last hue when she had stood in the sunken garden, forgetting him and crying low:

"Oh, if it were mine! If it were mine!"

He did not like American women with millions, but while he would not have said that he liked her, he did not wish her yet to move away. And she, too, did not wish, just yet, to move away. There was something dramatic and absorbing in the situation. She looked over the softly stirring grass and saw the sunshine was deepening its gold and the shadows were growing long. It was not a habit of hers to ask questions, but she asked one.

"Did you not like America?" was what she said.

"Hated it! Hated it! I went there lured by a belief that a man like myself, with muscle and will, even without experience, could make a fortune out of small capital on a sheep ranch. Wind and weather and disease played the devil with me. I lost the little I had and came back to begin over again--on nothing--here!" And he waved his hand over the park with its sward and coppice and bracken and the deer cropping in the late afternoon gold.

"To begin what again?" said Betty. It was an extraordinary enough thing,

seen in the light of conventions, that they should stand and talk like this. But the spark had kindled between eye and eye, and because of it they suddenly had forgotten that they were strangers.

"You are an American, so it may not seem as mad to you as it would to others. To begin to build up again, in one man's life, what has taken centuries to grow--and fall into this."

"It would be a splendid thing to do," she said slowly, and as she said it her eyes took on their colour of bluebells, because what she had seen had moved her. She had not looked at him, but at the cropping deer as she spoke, but at her next sentence she turned to him again.

"Where should you begin?" she asked, and in saying it thought of Stornham.

He laughed shortly.

"That is American enough," he said. "Your people have not finished their beginnings yet and live in the spirit of them. I tell you of a wild fancy, and you accept it as a possibility and turn on me with, 'Where should you begin?'"

"That is one way of beginning," said Bettina. "In fact, it is the only way."

He did not tell her that he liked that, but he knew that he did like it and that her mere words touched him like a spur. It was, of course, her lifelong breathing of the atmosphere of millions which made for this fashion of moving at once in the direction of obstacles presenting to the rest of the world barriers seemingly insurmountable. And yet there was something else in it, some quality of nature which did not alone suggest the omnipotence of wealth, but another thing which might be even stronger and therefore carried conviction. He who had raged and clenched his hands in the face of his knowledge of the aspect his dream would have presented if he had revealed it to the ordinary practical mind, felt that a point of view like this was good for him. There was in it stimulus for a fleeting moment at least.

"That is a good idea," he answered. "Where should you begin?"

She replied quite seriously, though he could have imagined some girls rather simpering over the question as a casual joke.

"One would begin at the fences," she said. "Don't you think so?"

"That is practical."

"That is where I shall begin at Stornham," reflectively.

"You are going to begin at Stornham?"

"How could one help it? It is not as large or as splendid as this has been, but it is like it in a way. And it will belong to my sister's son. No, I could not help it."

"I suppose you could not." There was a hint of wholly unconscious resentment in his tone. He was thinking that the effect produced by their boundless wealth was to make these people feel as a race of giants might--even their women unknowingly revealed it.

"No, I could not," was her reply. "I suppose I am on the whole a sort of commercial working person. I have no doubt it is commercial, that instinct which makes one resent seeing things lose their value."

"Shall you begin it for that reason?"

"Partly for that one--partly for another." She held out her hand to him. "Look at the length of the shadows. I must go. Thank you, Lord Mount Dunstan, for showing me the place, and thank you for undeceiving me."

He held the side gate open for her and lifted his cap as she passed through. He admitted to himself, with some reluctance, that he was not content that she should go even yet, but, of course, she must go. There passed through his mind a remote wonder why he had suddenly unbosomed himself to her in a way so extraordinarily unlike himself. It was, he thought next, because as he had taken her about from one place to another he had known that she had seen in things what he had seen in

them so long--the melancholy loneliness, the significance of it, the lost hopes that lay behind it, the touching pain of the stateliness wrecked. She had shown it in the way in which she tenderly looked from side to side, in the very lightness of her footfall, in the bluebell softening of her eyes. Oh, yes, she had understood and cared, American as she was! She had felt it all, even with her hideous background of Fifth Avenue behind her.

When he had spoken it had been in involuntary response to an emotion in herself.

So he stood, thinking, as he for some time watched her walking up the sunset-glowing road.